

## Hooked On Recovery

September 26, 2008

*Deposed*

*“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. 3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. 5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.” ~Psalm 23*

*“If you tell the truth you don't have to remember anything.” ~Mark Twain*

Many of you have noticed that I hadn't written much this past year. Thank you for your support and encouragement. The last Hooked on Recovery “Tube and Worm” was my first attempt to get back into it. Why? Maybe this is just a juicy rationalization but I've been through some tough stuff. CCAR, and I, went through a trial – literally. We were sued in civil court.

It would be easy to skip right past this chapter of my life and pretend it didn't happen. I didn't realize how deeply I was affected until I walked awhile on the other side. I believe I need to write about it. I need to get it out. I believe a strength of recovery is transparency. We're as sick as our secrets. So I try to share my experience, strength and hope even when it's not pretty.

Anyway, I now know more about the civil suit process than I ever cared to know. And let me say that I believe CCAR didn't do anything wrong, and today, after the trial I still believe that. I made a decision a few years ago in the best interest of the organization and all the individuals involved. It was the most difficult decision I have ever had to make in my working career. Even considering the toll it took on me, I'd make the same decision again. It was the right thing to do. Often times, the right thing is not the easiest thing.

I was not doing too well for several months. During the trial, I struggled emotionally. Sure, there were periods of joy and peace but overall, I scuffled with forces unseen. I admit it got to me. I took a lot of stuff personally. I questioned my character, my motives and had it out with God more than once. I lived for days on end with a river of anxiety coursing through my soul. Often the river flooded its banks and spilled into other areas of my life. I couldn't compartmentalize “the trial” into its own box. It kept escaping. It has been several weeks since the burden was lifted. In that time, I had a wonderful two week vacation and I'm slowly being restored to something resembling emotional health. Today, I thank God for my recovery, for without it I couldn't have walked through it.

Once a civil suit is filed, there is an information gathering phase. I was the primary target. I had my computer hard drive copied and examined. Every email I ever sent, every document I worked on, was scoured for any damning evidence. Boxes and boxes of other CCAR documents were sent to the attorneys only to create boxes and boxes of more documents. Even though there was nothing to be found, everything came under intense scrutiny. On better days I felt attacked. On bad days I felt violated.

A primary tool of the legal system and a key component of the information gathering phase is the deposition. I can sum up depositions simply. They suck. In a deposition you are deemed guilty until proven guilty. It doesn't really matter if you are completely innocent. Almost anything goes. Attorneys fish for something to use to prove their argument. Doesn't matter if it's true or not. My deposition was strung out over four days spanning six months. The third one came after a particularly long break. I didn't sleep well for several days leading up to this session. It was filled with intensely difficult questioning and piercing accusations. Piles of documents were put on the table and wording questioned repeatedly. After I was done, I headed back to the office dejected, saddened and on edge because I was scheduled to finish up just two days later. To say I dreaded returning to that deposition table is a drastic understatement. Terror seems more apropos. I walked into the Hartford Recovery Community Center when a seasoned and trusted CCAR volunteer said, "Wow, you don't look so good." With a half-hearted smile I said, "Yeah, this has to be one of the top three worst days of the year". She said, "Well at least you didn't drink or drug over it today." I said, "Yes, that's true."

Then as I trudged up the steps to my office, the thought came with such force, such power, such clarity it stunned me – "Yes, a drink would make this all go away, even for awhile. It's worth it." I didn't think about going to the local bar and having a "refreshing" cold beer or a "glamorous" glitzy cocktail. No. I thought about going to the package store and having a long, long visit with three of my old buddies Jim Beam, Jack Daniels and Johnny Walker. Oblivion seemed like a viable alternative.

That's what scared me most.

I trembled and shook inside. Emotion pent up for too long, poured out. The river of anxiety was now a stream of tears flowing down my cheeks. I called Sandy and cried. I called Tony and cried. Russ and Rick and Tommy and Shelly all brought more tears. These people said they would pray for me. They would ask others to pray for me as well. That only made me cry more.

I went to a 12 step meeting the next day and shared immediately about the powerful thought that rocked me 20 years into sobriety. Then others shared. I wasn't alone. Thank God for the rooms. People talked about having the same thought but not calling people, not reaching out, and disastrous results followed. After the meeting I felt better, but I still had to get deposed the following day. Honestly, I was terrified, irrationally afraid. My mind struggled furiously to figure out a way to get out of it. The fear was out of whack, not proportional to what was going on. I put my feet up on my desk and prayed and prayed. Exhaustion overcame me and I dozed off, or I think I did...

I was down, face down in the dirt. I was lying in a desert battlefield. I was defeated. Done. Death was near, waiting for the final blow. I sensed darkness in front of me, a fortress behind me, the fortress filled with light. From the light a voice commanded, "Stand up!" Slowly, I stood, my being filling with a peace that surpasses all understanding. And with the peace came something more amazing; resolve. My confidence surged to the point of bordering on arrogance. With one hand outstretched I beckoned to the darkness a la Neo and Morpheus in the Matrix. I had a source of power with me and I knew I could not be defeated.

I woke up and shook off the cobwebs. Slowly, I realized I was no longer afraid. I had some inner peace for the first time in a long time. The next day the peace and resolve were with me and I finished the deposition.

Afterwards, I had coffee with Ted Heiser, our attorney, a noble and kind man in his own right, and I relayed my vision (?) to him. He sat quiet for a moment, shook his head and then shared about what happened with him the previous night. In the early morning hours he was up with his newborn son and flipped on the TV. He stopped at a movie where Orlando Bloom, defending Jerusalem in the time of the Crusades, was standing on a fortress wall gazing out into the desert as he prepared the city for attack from an unseen enemy. Our attorney's thoughts drifted to me, the trial and defending CCAR.

Oh. The name of the movie? Kingdom of Heaven.

*Hooked on Recovery* is a biweekly message from CCAR Executive Director Phillip Valentine, person in recovery since 12/28/87, devoted husband, a father of five and just another surf fisherman. These thoughts, views and opinions reflect on his personal recovery and are not meant in any way to speak for the entire recovery community. He welcomes all your comments and suggestions on this column, email him at [phillip@ccar.us](mailto:phillip@ccar.us). Visit the website at [www.ccar.us](http://www.ccar.us) to read the entire series.